

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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R 150840Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 714
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

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CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY
JOHANNESBURG FOR LABOFF

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OEXC, ELAB, SCUL, EAID, SF
SUBJ: AFL-CIO CONVENTION, DECEMBER 8-14, 1977

REF: STATE 48025

1. ATTENDANCE BY THREE BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE UNION LEADERS, LEONARD SIKHAKHANE, CLEMENT MONTSHO AND JACOB NTHEME, AT THE AFL-CIO CONVENTION, REPRESENTED MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH IN RELATIONS BETWEEN AMERICAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN LABOR MOVEMENTS. REPORTS BROUGHT BACK BY PARTICIPANTS AND FROM U.S. AND OTHER AFRICAN TRADE UNION LEADERS INDICATE THAT UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIFFICULTIES UNDER WHICH BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS MUST OPERATE WAS MEASURABLY INCREASED. THE RECOGNITION ACCORDED BY THE AFL-CIO TO THE PARTICIPANTS WAS ALSO SEEN LOCALLY AS IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENT FOR BLACK SA TRADE UNIONISTS IN GENERAL.

2. DIFFICULTIES WHICH WERE ENCOUNTERED WERE LARGELY OF A PROGRAMMING NATURE. PARTICIPANTS FELT THAT NUMBER OF
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SUGGESTIONS WHICH HAD BEEN SUBMITTED BY POST AT THEIR BEHEST BEFORE THEIR DEPARTURE WERE IGNORED. THEY WERE, FOR EXAMPLE, INTERESTED IN MEETING WITH LOCAL TRADE UNION LEADERS IN US AT COMPANIES SUCH AS KELLOGGS WHOSE SUBSIDIARIES THEY ARE TRYING TO ORGANIZE IN SA. THEY SAY THEY WERE TOLD BY THEIR PROGRAM OFFICER THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO MAKE SUCH CONTACTS BEFORE THE

CONVENTION AND THAT IN ANY EVENT LOCAL TRADE UNION LEADERS WOULD BE AVAILABLE IN LOS ANGELES. THEN AT THE CONVENTION THEY WERE TOLD THAT IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO MEET LOCAL LEADERS FROM THE GLASS, FOOD AND TRANSPORTATION INDUSTRIES. IN SUM, THE THREE PARTICIPANTS ARE UNANIMOUS IN THEIR BELIEF THAT THEIR PROGRAM WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE IN TERMS OF THEIR PERSONAL GOALS IF ARRANGEMENTS HAD BEEN MADE TO MEET U.S. TRADE UNION LEADERS AT LOCAL LEVEL.

3. MONTSHO, WHO IS GENERAL SECRETARY OF TRANSPORT AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION AND ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN ORGANIZING TRUCKERS AND BUS DRIVERS, WANTED TO MEET WITH THE TEAMSTERS IN WASHDC BUT WAS TOLD THIS WAS NOT POSSIBLE. HE WAS INTRODUCED INSTEAD TO AFL-CIO RAILWAY AND DOCK WORKERS IN LOS ANGELES.

4. IT IS GENERAL IMPRESSION OF THESE PARTICIPANTS THAT THEIR PROGRAM OFFICER WAS INSENSITIVE TO THEIR NEEDS AND REQUESTS. WHILE POST HAD RECOMMENDED THAT HOME HOSPITALITY BE ARRANGED ON THANKSGIVING DAY, FOR EXAMPLE, THEY WERE IN FACT LEFT TO WANDER STREETS OF NORFOLK, VIRGINIA, ON THEIR OWN. NTHEBE SAID "THANKSGIVING WAS ONE OF THE WORST DAYS IN THE PROGRAM".

5. FOR THE FUTURE THE THREE PARTICIPANTS SUGGEST LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT INTERESTED U.S. UNIONS BE ADVISED IN ADVANCE OF THE ARRIVAL OF GRANTEES. SIKHAKHANE NOTED THAT EVEN U.S. TRADE UNIONISTS WITH WHOM HE MET WERE CONCERNED THAT THEY WERE NOT GIVEN ADVANCE NOTICE OF THEIR PROGRAM.

6. POST MAINTAINS CONTINUING CONTACT WITH THREE PARTICIPANTS AND IS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN WORKING OUT OTHER EXCHANGE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES WITH THEIR COOPERATION.

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